

# DRAFT

## CHAPTER 7

## TRANSPORTATION

### GOAL

Establish the principles to guide decisions regarding the various modes of transportation throughout the neighborhood and adjoining streets in order to promote a pleasant, pedestrian-oriented and safe environment for all.

### BACKGROUND

This chapter addresses existing conditions pertaining to the various modes of transportation within and immediately surrounding the Miller Southside neighborhood. These include the street network and sidewalks, bike paths, vehicular traffic patterns, and bus transit access. The map to the left identifies the existing streets and their classification in relation to the Town's thoroughfares.

The framework established by its streets supports a network of public and private open spaces and pedestrian paths as well as the transportation needs of its land uses. This organization of about twenty streets includes two collectors -- Airport Road and Country Club Drive -- that intersect Main Street (an arterial road) and one collector -- Southgate Drive -- that connects to Route 460 (a federal highway). The quality of the streets vary: some are urban in character with hedges, concrete sidewalks and on-street parking permitted on each side while others are more rural without sidewalks and narrower.

For many decades the Miller-Southside neighborhood has been characterized as a safe place to live with a lush landscape that contributes to a pedestrian-friendly setting. Throughout the day numerous town residents take a stroll, walk their dogs, ride bikes or jog through the tree-lined neighborhood streets. Some children walk to and from nearby schools. During lunchtime, other citizens walk in groups along its shaded sidewalks. Thus, the neighborhood residents have an interest in enhancing the beauty and safety of its streets.

In 2000 the residents took advantage of the town's neighborhood grant program that resulted in small landscaped islands at four locations -- Airport at Draper Road and Preston Avenue and Miller Street at Draper Road and Preston Avenue. The intended goal has yet to be entirely achieved: plans for signage and other improvements are underway.

And until recently, there has been a perceived balance between the presence of cars and people. Thus, during 2002 and 2003 many residents participated in town-sponsored public meetings to mitigate the undesirable nuisances and safety issues related to an increase in vehicular traffic activity. Throughout these meetings residents repeatedly stated that they wish to encourage and maintain a pedestrian-friendly and safe place to live. Residents feel it is important to have foresight on these matters rather than wait to react.

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## OPPORTUNITIES

There are multiple convenient ways to get to and through the Miller-Southside neighborhood which is predominately single-family residential [zoned R-4]. Modes of transportation include car, bus, bicycle, and walking. Pedestrian and bike travel in this neighborhood is frequent. The provision of safer streets will enhance these modes of travel and encourage the usage of more non-vehicular modes of transportation.

The neighborhood meetings throughout 2002 and 2003 addressed traffic issues as well as increased communication and understanding of the interrelated issues among residents and small business owners. Overwhelmingly, residents are committed to address the safety issues with traffic calming measures. The provision of landscaped elements such as circles, chokers, diverters, etc. have been shown to calm traffic and increase the quality of the neighborhood and safety of all.

Landscaped islands installed in 2000 at the intersections of Draper Road and Preston Avenue with Airport Road as well as Miller Avenue enhance the lush landscape, environmental quality and safety of walkers.

Huckleberry Trail is used extensively as an alternative mode of transportation as well as place of recreation.

Alleys running north-south and mid-block between Main Street, Draper Road and Preston Avenue are a unique feature of the neighborhood. These narrow and lush landscaped roadways provide access to some residents' garages, pick-up for trash service as well as alternative walking path. Alleys also serve as a buffer between the homes on Draper and the businesses on Main.

There are very defined entry points into the neighborhood that could be physically enhanced as 'gateways'.

## CHALLENGES

There is an increase in number of vehicles that traverse the Miller-Southside neighborhood due to an overall rise in vehicles resulting from the prosperity of the town and university. Several streets have become cut-through routes. For some drivers, it is a quick cut-through route to the university; for others, it is a speedy way to get around downtown to other neighborhoods. Cut-through and swift traffic jeopardize the safety of all and quality of life for residents.

Although factual data recorded in 2002 suggest that the volume and speed of vehicles meets the norm accepted for traffic engineers, residents have witnessed incidents that propose otherwise. Progressively more often, residents encounter cars failing to stop at stop signs, and drivers exceeding the speed limit between stop signs. Traffic calming measures are necessary to ensure safety of all as well as maintain enjoyable environment for walkers, cyclists and joggers.

In public meetings residents identified Airport Road, Southgate Drive and Draper Road as thoroughfares that urgently need traffic calming measures with Edgewood Lane and Preston Avenue of increasing concern. It was acknowledged that it is difficult to traverse Main Street on foot

On-street parking is permitted throughout the neighborhood, however, destinations such as the Library, Huckleberry Trail and businesses along Main Street have created a need for more parking. While there are off-street parking lots, the streets near these destinations have seen an increase of overflow parking. Many residents are finding it difficult or impossible to park in front of their own homes. This parking issue may need to be resolved with the use of 2-hour parking signs, parking permits requirements, or further parking provided downtown

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## GENERAL POLICIES

This Miller-Southside Neighborhood Plan has been written to be coherent with the Town of Blacksburg's Comprehensive Plan. The following general policies of that plan are particularly relevant to the content of this chapter.

- “Create a network of sidewalks that serves the entire community and provides for safe pedestrian access to all potential destinations in Town including public schools, downtown, Virginia Tech, community facilities, major shopping areas, and residential areas. Allow a variety of sidewalk sizes and materials as appropriate to setting and use.” [Transportation, p. 41]
- Since 2001, no commercial or heavy trucks are permitted on Draper Road and Preston Avenue.
- For over twenty years there has been a transportation plan known as the Hubbard Street extension on the priority list of road improvements.

## ACTION STRATEGIES

The following action strategies are intended to assist the town staff and neighborhood residents in achievement of the goal of this chapter. The timeline for implementation can be found in Chapter 10 of this document.

### Town Action Strategies

- The town staff will continue to work with residents and businesses to address the concerns regarding increasing traffic safety issues outlined in this Miller-Southside Neighborhood Plan.
- The town staff will maintain and enhance the communication among residents and businesses in the Miller-Southside neighborhood.

[reference the traffic study plan]

### Neighborhood Action Strategies

- Residents collect/document anecdotal situations.
- The Neighborhood Watch